

But the damage and danger does not end with hyperinflation. The International Monetary Fund reports Venezuela is experiencing “widespread shortages of essential goods, including food, exacting a tragic toll.” Grocery stores have rows and rows of empty shelves. Venezuelans can’t find food to feed their families and form long lines outside of stores, hoping to buy whatever is in stock, from sugar to shampoo.

In response, Socialist President Maduro has ordered police to limit consumers to two shopping days per week at government-owned food stores. One frustrated Venezuelan shopper noted: “It is exasperating, but it is the only way to get food in Venezuela.”

Inflation and food shortages are only the tip of the iceberg. When supplies run out, when jobs can’t be found, violence erupts. In just 1 month in 2014, violent street riots killed 43 Venezuelans, blocking citizens from accessing food, transportation, and medical services. Occupied buildings were torched, injuring hundreds.

Venezuela is now one of the most violent countries in the world, with a chilling 82 homicides per 100,000 population, roughly 20 times worse than America’s homicide rate. Caracas, Venezuela’s capital, is the world’s most violent city, with a war-zone-like 120 murders per 100,000 citizens.

Venezuela’s insolvency has forced it to slash defense spending by 34 percent, putting Venezuelan citizens at even more heightened risk of loss of life.

Venezuela’s tragedy is not because it is a resource-poor country. To the contrary, Venezuela has more proven oil reserves than any country on Earth, even more than the entire oil-rich North American continent.

Venezuela’s collapse is because of two things. First, Venezuela decided to experiment with socialism, an economic model that has failed every country that has tried it. Second, Venezuela’s politicians were seduced by the lure of out-of-control spending financed by more borrowing and higher debt, the same temptation Washington politicians have succumbed to for decades.

America must learn from Venezuela and every other country that has been financially irresponsible. Mr. Speaker, time is running out. Washington must balance the budget before America’s debt burden spirals out of control. America cannot wait until our financial crisis is lost and it is too late to prevent the debilitating insolvency and bankruptcy that awaits us.

I pray the American people will be good stewards of our Republic in 2016 and elect Washington officials who both understand the threat posed by deficits and debt and have the backbone to fix it. Mr. Speaker, America’s future depends on it.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS HURTS REAL PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about a crisis in my home State of New Mexico, a crisis that has hurt real people who rely on the Medicaid program for lifesaving care.

Mr. Speaker, almost 3 years ago, the New Mexico Human Services Department, with the support of Governor Susana Martinez, claimed that it had credible allegations of fraud and suspended Medicaid payments to 15 behavioral health providers. This move wiped out the behavioral health system in a State where there are already significant provider shortages.

I want to take a minute to talk about what that really means. That means if you are a person who struggles with schizophrenia but manages it effectively with regular treatment, that regular treatment stops and you go back to square one. That means that if you are someone who has been diagnosed as bipolar, who has finally found a trusted provider, someone who has brought some stability and comfort to your care plan, you no longer have access to that person.

The loss of services is devastating, and I have seen it firsthand. There is a constituent who typically calls my office every day, multiple times a day. He calls my office. He calls other members of the delegation, the mayor’s office, and the chief of police. But from time to time the calls stop. They stop because this individual, who can be the most warm-hearted person I know, is in jail. He has a mental illness and a substance abuse problem and can be belligerent when he feels threatened, so he sometimes has run-ins with local law enforcement, and he ends up in jail because the system is failing him. He is not receiving the services he needs.

Our jails and sometimes our emergency rooms have become the de facto behavioral health system in our State because, when you don’t have the infrastructure to care for individuals with behavioral health issues, that is where people end up.

Mr. Speaker, I am, frankly, appalled that people in my home State are being treated in this way, but if you can believe it, it gets worse.

Last month, the New Mexico attorney general completed his review of the allegations and found that there did not appear to be a pattern of fraud. Thirteen of the 15 providers accused of fraud have now been cleared, and the people of New Mexico are left to wonder why, why a whole State’s behavioral health system was wiped out and a large population of vulnerable individuals left to fend for themselves. I think they deserve answers.

I have been working with my colleagues in the New Mexico delegation, pushing the Centers for Medicare and

Medicaid Services to exercise Federal oversight and ensure accountability since the payment suspension was announced. We have sent multiple letters, made phone calls, held in-person meetings with officials at every level at CMS and HHS, and I have to say I am extremely disappointed by their lack of engagement.

We sent another letter to CMS in February sharing the attorney general’s report and asking that they conduct a Federal investigation, and we are going to continue pushing for accountability and working to make sure this never happens again.

I plan to introduce legislation that would ensure network adequacy and continuity of care in a State’s Medicaid program, and I know my colleagues have legislation in the works as well.

Mr. Speaker, I have spent my entire career fighting for vulnerable New Mexicans, people who are voiceless in the political process. It would be easy to ignore them, as so many have done, because they are too busy struggling to survive to engage in the political process. It would be easy, but it would be wrong.

This is the most egregious abuse of power I have seen in my decades of government service, and I will not sit idly by while the most vulnerable among us suffer. We must have action. We must have accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in calling for a long overdue Federal investigation of the behavioral health provider suspension in New Mexico.

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND THE FARC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak against the ongoing negotiations in Havana between the Government of Colombia and the terrorist group known as the FARC.

This draft agreement contains alarming provisions that could empower the ringleaders of the world’s largest cocaine cartel and undermine America’s security interests in the region.

It would also make American taxpayers foot the bill, through their tax dollars, in support of this bad agreement that effectively whitewashes human rights abuses while the administration of President Obama seeks more than \$70 million to help implement this proposal.

This agreement diminishes the FARC’s responsibility for its role in drug trafficking as well as the thousands of murders and kidnappings and other innumerable crimes that the FARC has perpetrated against the Colombian people by allowing the soldiers and the leaders of the FARC to avoid any jail time for all of those crimes.

To make matters worse, this agreement creates an equivalency between